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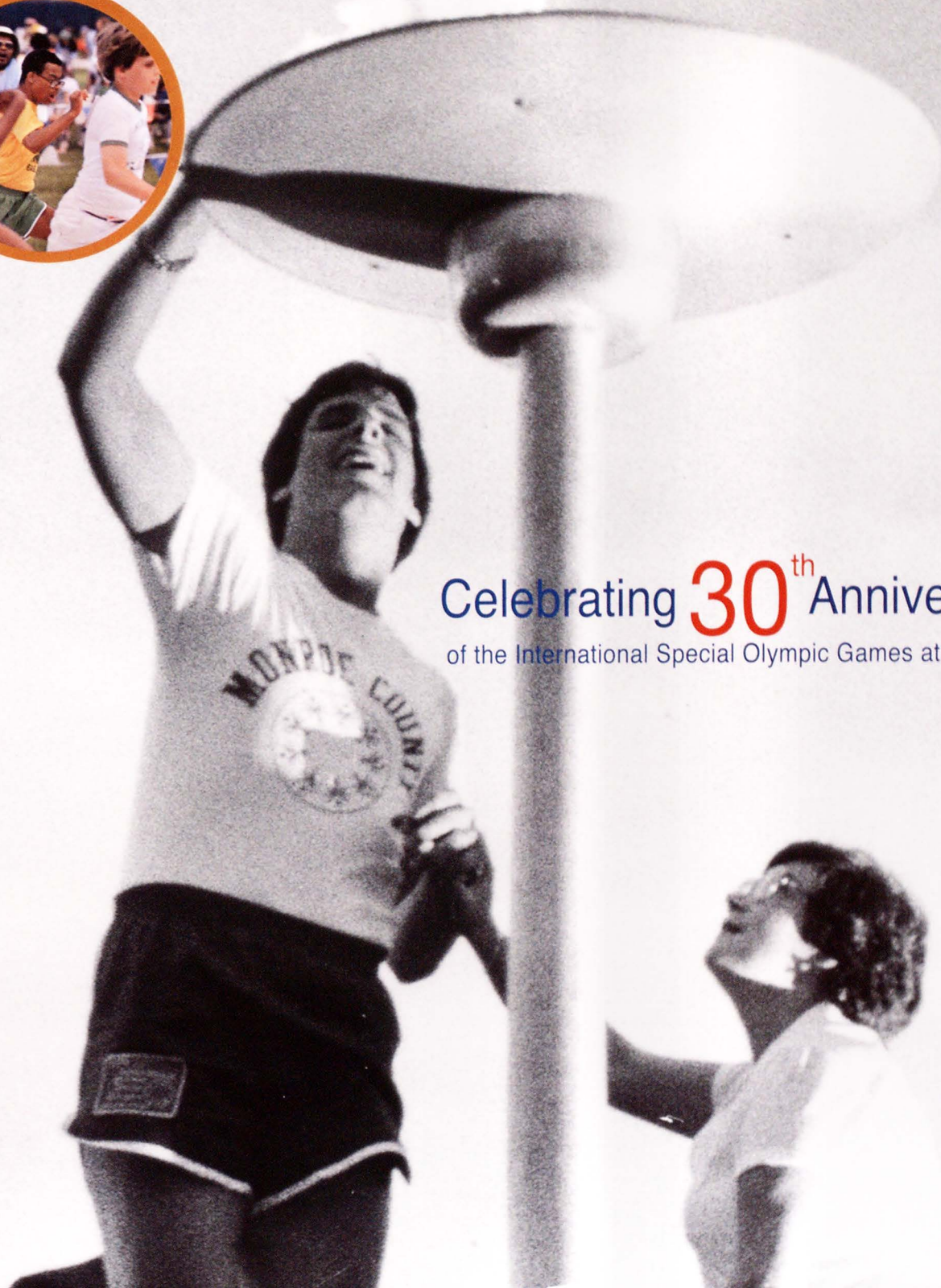
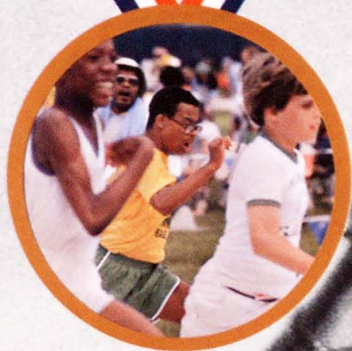
# Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the International Special Olympic Games at Brockport

Nicholas Mascari

# Kaleidoscope

THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT

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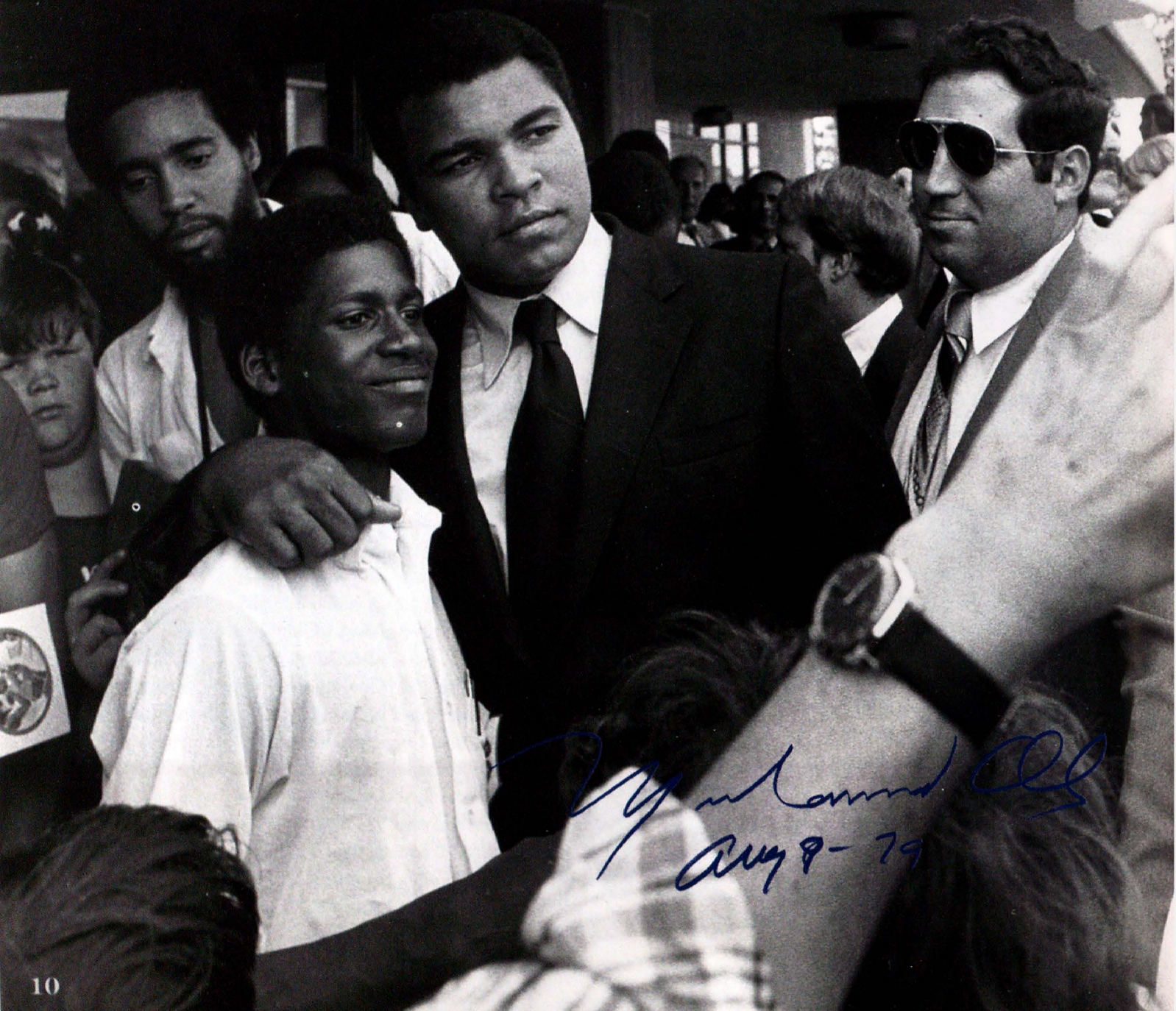
Celebrating **30<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary  
of the International Special Olympic Games at Brockport





*"Service is the rent we pay for a room in heaven."*

— Muhammad Ali



*Muhammad Ali*  
*Aug 8 - 79*





# Celebrating 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

of the International Special Olympic Games at Brockport

*Hi, I'm Donald McDougall and I was at the 1979 Special Olympics in Brockport. I still have my medals I won in the 440, and softball throw, and the standing broad jump. It was the best time of my life.*

An e-mail from Special Olympian **Donald McDougall** to The College at Brockport Archives, March 14, 2005

by Nicholas Mascari



The Fifth International Special Olympic Games — held in August 1979 — were indeed special for everyone involved. For the 3,500 athletes from 26 countries who came to Brockport to compete, it was an opportunity to achieve, excel and change attitudes about the potential of the intellectually disabled. For the 8,000 chaperones and volunteers who made the event work, it was an emotional outpouring of love and support for the special Olympians. For Brockport the College and Brockport the

village who had never before, and have never again, come together in a common endeavor of this one's monumental size and complexity, the

*Let me win. But if I cannot win,  
let me be brave in the attempt.*

— Special Olympics Oath

games remain, 30 years later, as they were for Special Olympian **Donald McDougall**, one of Brockport's "best times."

### Prelude to Six Days in August

The International Special Olympic Games came to Brockport for many reasons. The College had a distinguished academic history in adapted physical education; it had hosted three similar, but smaller, events in '68, '75 and '76; federal legislation had been enacted to fund programs to develop physical education programs for the disabled, and the concept of "mainstreaming" was taking root in schools



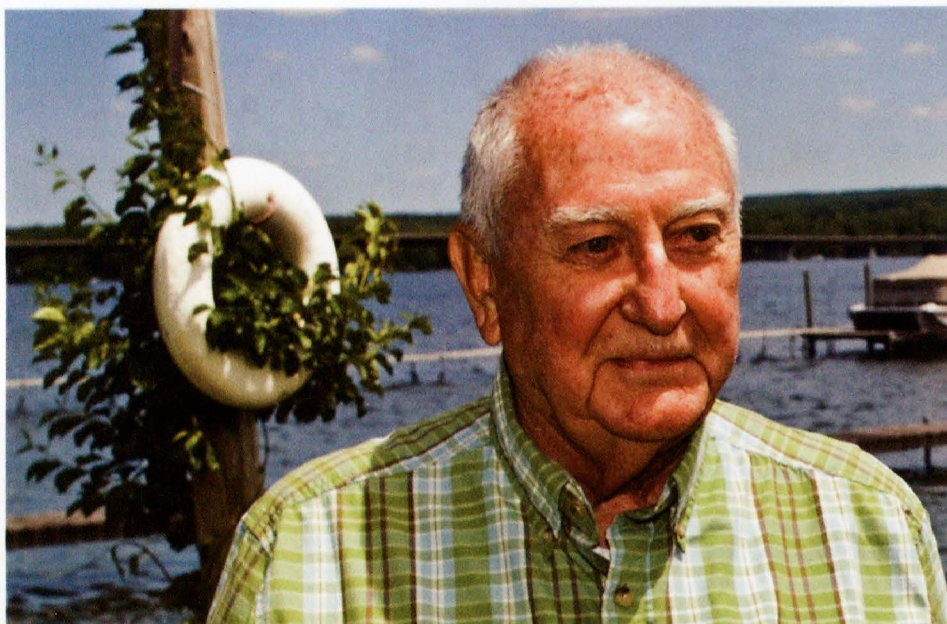
Eunice Kennedy Shriver

around the country, bringing the mentally and physically disabled out of the shadows and into a more inclusive society. In addition, the campus had the scope of athletic and housing facilities to accommodate the games.

Then College President **Albert W. Brown** felt that the College had an important part to play in service to New York. "I always thought that we should see what the needs were for New York state and what was legitimate for us to be doing. We had good resources to serve an underserved population. We had hands-on experience with this population who were fast becoming part of society," he said.

**Joseph Winnick**, PhD, professor of physical education and sport, and the father of the nationally recognized adaptive physical education program at the College was a driving force behind bringing the 1979 games at Brockport. "Brockport had developed a model for adaptive physical education programs that included research, professional preparation and service. It began here in 1966 and it's become the longest running program in the country and a leader in the field."

Beyond Brockport, beginning in the late 1950s, **Eunice Kennedy Shriver** and the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation had made a commitment to developing programs for the intellectually disabled, especially in the area



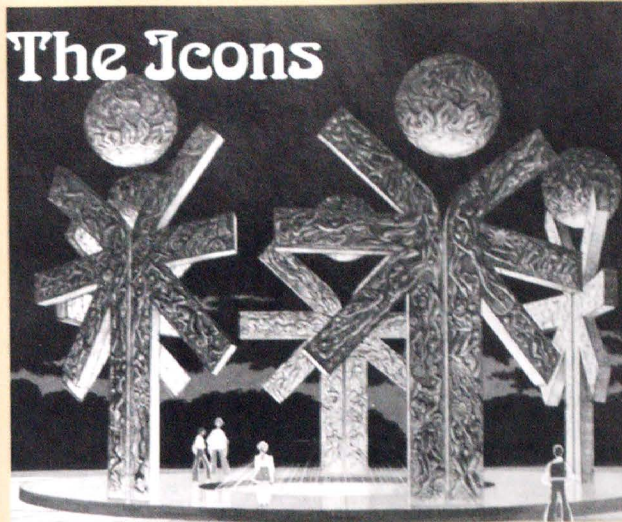
(Top) Albert W. Brown at the Special Olympics Games in 1979, and in 2009 at his home in Chautauqua.



of physical education. By 1962, the Shriver family had begun hosting handicapped children from local institutions at what they referred to as "Camp Shriver," which were summer games held at Timberlawn, their 30-acre estate in Rockville, MD. From those small, local beginnings and through Eunice Shriver's determined and relentless commitment and vision to improve the quality of life for the intellectually handicapped, the International Special Olympics movement was born. Camp Shriver eventually morphed into the first International Special Olympic Games with 1,000 athletes competing in July 1968 at Chicago's Soldier Field.

Following three more editions of the summer game in Chicago, Los Angeles and Mt. Pleasant, MI; and one winter game in Steamboat Springs, CO, the Special Olympic Movement and Brockport's adaptive physical education expertise and experience came together in August 1979 for the fifth International Special Olympic Games. "That event put the Special Olympics on the map. It was the biggest and best games ever done to date," said **Peter N. Smits**, who in 1979 was Brockport's 32-year-old vice president for institutional affairs and development, and director of the international games.

## The Icons



While the Soviet Union didn't send athletes to participate in the Brockport games, they did send artist **Zureb Tsereteli**. And the two sculptures he created, gifts from the Soviet Union, added an extra dimension to the international scope of the games and have become iconic landmarks on the campus landscape.

"A big country needs to have big art," Tsereteli

told President Brown, to explain why his design for *Light and Knowledge to the World*, the statue of Prometheus gazing south from the front of the Allen Administration Building, was originally designed to be four times the height of the final work. According to President Brown, a review of scale with the sculptor and Russian officials, in the spirit of détente, led to an agreement that the Greek god who stole fire (representing knowledge) from Zeus and gave it to humanity would top out at just 39 feet.

The other Tsereteli creation, *Joy and Happiness to All The Children of The World*, surrounds a fountain on the east side of the Drake Memorial Library and commemorates not only the Special Olympic Games but also that the year 1979 was the United Nation's "Year of the Child." It includes



Zureb Tsereteli, Wolodymyr Pylyshenko and Albert W. Brown

five stylized bronze "children," modeled on the Special Olympics logo, surrounding a reflection pool and fountain.

Both works were cast in Tsereteli's home town of Tbilisi, in the Russian province of Georgia, and shipped to Brockport where they were assembled in the weeks prior to the games. The statues were dedicated in ceremonies during International Special Olympics Week. In addition to remarks from Sargent Shriver, "For the Russian government to choose this occasion for their first gift to the people of the United States is an honor to the Olympians,

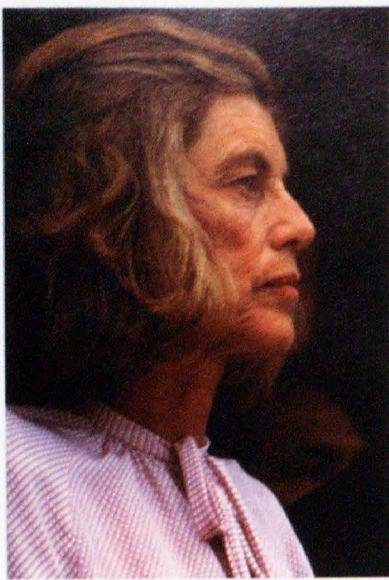
their chaperones, parents and friends;" and President Brown, a delegation from Russia including the Deputy Minister of Culture **Evgeniy Mikhailovich Chekharin** who said, "Let these compositions be a symbol of cooperation between our states and people."



Zureb Tsereteli and Eunice Kennedy Shriver







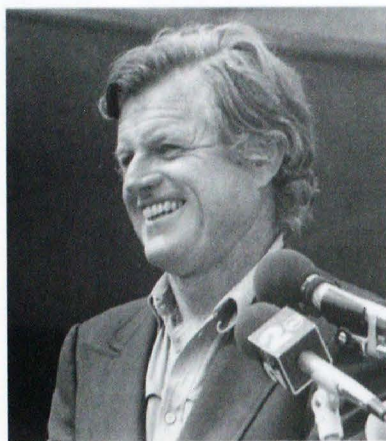
## The Plan

Following the successful 1975 New York State Special Olympics Games at Brockport there was some enthusiasm for making a bid for the '79 International Games. Joe Winnick recalls making the suggestion to President Al Brown, but Brown thought it better to "try the state games one more time" in '76 before taking a shot at the '79 games.

In late 1976 Brown brought together the committee that would craft the site bid proposal. In addition to Brown and Smits, the committee included from the College, **Patrick Smith**, vice president for student

*"In Special Olympics it is not the strongest body or most dazzling mind that counts. It is the invincible spirit which overcomes all handicaps. For without this spirit, winning medals is empty. But with it, there is no defeat."*

*Eunice Kennedy Shriver*



affairs; **Paul Jansma**, assistant professor of physical education and sport; **Ronald French**, assistant professor of special physical education and a member of the New York State Special Olympics Board of Directors; **Marvin Duyrea**, president of Brockport Enterprises and the Brockport Faculty/Student Association; and **Dorothy Buehring**, president of the New York State Special Olympics. The group oversaw the creation of an exhaustive, minutely detailed, 275-page proposal.

*"Special Olympics has given vast numbers of persons with intellectual disabilities in our Commonwealth, our country, and our world the priceless opportunity to compete in sports and form lifelong friendships. I remember how moved I was in 1979 to attend the International Special Olympics at The College at Brockport and see the extraordinary impact of the Games firsthand. I've had immense respect for The College at Brockport ever since."*

*Pat Jansma*

As a result of the impressive proposal, **Eunice Shriver** and New York State Governor **Hugh Carey** officially announced in August 1977 that Brockport had been chosen to host the 1979 International Special Olympic Games. The College, the village, and the region now had two short years to ready the campus for an influx of thousands of athletes and their chaperones and many more thousands of spectators.

In addition to establishing a multitude of committees, the need to recruit thousands of volunteers and raise many hundreds of



Peter Smits

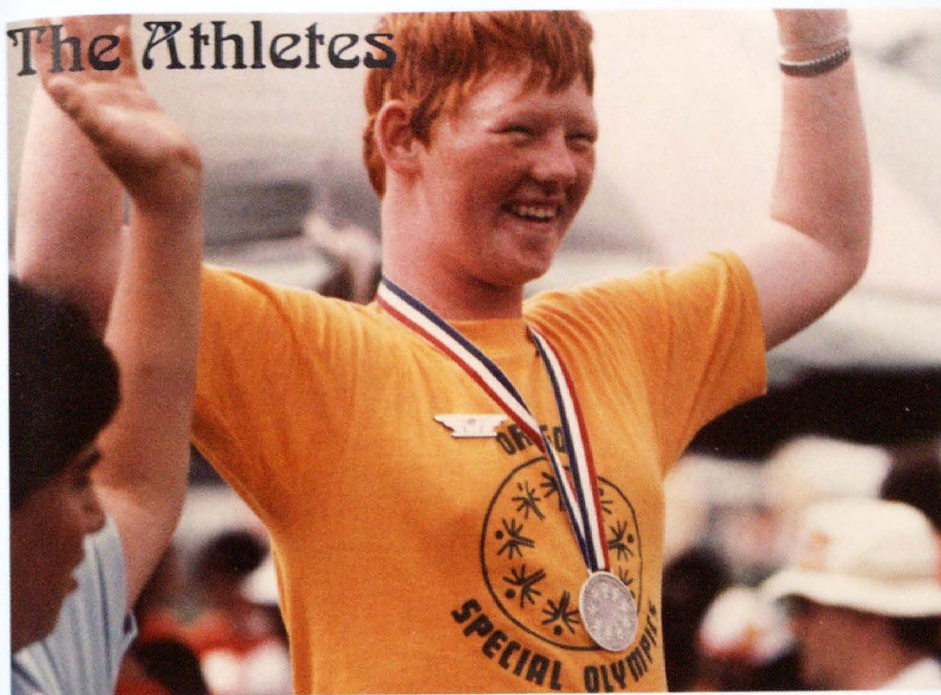
thousands of dollars, close to the top of the lengthy "to do" list was the imperative to secure more than \$560,000 to fund the construction of an 8,000-seat stadium and new eight-lane, all-weather track (which continues to be the largest on-campus Division III stadium in the country), as well as another \$450,000 for additional campus infrastructure improvements. It was a task overseen by **Peter Smits** and **Patrick Smith**.

They did their jobs well. Major donations arrived from New York state, Coca-Cola, Eastman Kodak Co., Xerox, and Norelco. Hundreds of organizations and individuals participated in the "Sponsor an Athlete" program to cover the \$200 per athlete cost, while dozens of companies provided in-kind services, and another \$100,000 came from the Brockport Faculty-Student Association. Fundraising efforts were so successful, in fact, that organizers realized a \$243,000 profit after meeting the games expenses of \$2.3 million. (The profit was returned

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# The Athletes



More than 3,500 special Olympians came to Brockport to compete in the largest International Special Olympics in the history of the games.

With all the celebrities descending on Brockport, it's easy to forget that the real stars were the athletes themselves. And while the role of the celebrities was to attract attention to the games and redirect the spotlight to the athletes and the mission of the games, a job they performed with distinction, it was the athletes whose stars shined the brightest throughout the games. They competed in track and field, gymnastics, swimming, floor hockey and a variety of ball games such as soccer, softball throw, bowling, and basketball.

**Errol O'Neal**, a 12-year-old gymnast from DeRidder, LA, whose congenital knee condition kept him from being able to flex his knees, thrilled the crowd with an inspiring performance that earned him a gold medal and a hug from **Sally Struthers**.

At 67, **Seth Hubbard** traveled from Clarkston, ID, to be the oldest competitor in the games, and earning a bronze medal in the 30+ bowling competition.

**Andrew Bell** from Geneva, NY, took home a gold and silver medal in gymnastics to the delight of his parents **John** and **Bunny Bell**.

**Jerry "Disco" Cooperwood**, a 17-year-old high jumper from Kensett, AR, with a unique version of the Fosbury Flop technique, overcame a case of nerves, a bad jump, and a false start to eventually take home a medal and have his picture taken with **Dick Fosbury**.

At the end of each event, competitors received a congratulatory hug from their individual volunteer "hugger," whose job it is to get their athlete to and from the event and, most importantly, offer a hug and a pat on the back at its conclusion. "My wife and I spent the whole week with the South Carolina contingent. It was really a very special time for both of us and very moving," said **Allyn Hammel**, of Brockport.





# The Celebrities



They were luminaries from the worlds of sports, politics, and entertainment, and they came to Brockport to support the Special Olympic movement.

**Christopher Reeve**, who had completed the first *Superman* movie and was on his way to begin the second, came. **Rafer Johnson**, 1960 Olympic Decathlon champion and special friend of the Kennedy family, was there, as were newspaper columnist **Art Buchwald**, TV stars **Sally Struthers**, **Susan St. James**, **Dick Sargent**, **Phil Donahue**, **Marlo Thomas** and **Phyllis George Brown**; and members of the Kennedy clan, including Senator **Ted Kennedy** — explaining why he was president of the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation, “My family thought I should be president of something.” **Ethel Kennedy** also was there as well as many Kennedy and Shriver children, including 24-year-old **Maria Shriver** who, it was noted by one columnist, was

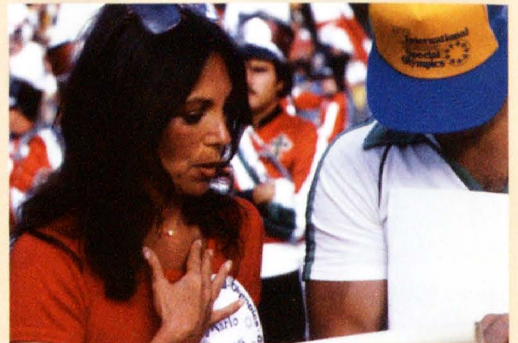
spotted walking arm-in-arm with **Arnold Schwarzenegger**.

Athletes such as **Hank Aaron**, **Pele**, **Bobby Orr**, **Phil Esposito**, **Ron Guidry**, **Dick Fosbury**, and **John Naber** lent their support, as did **Frank Gifford**, who also was there to produce a 17-minute segment on the games for ABC’s *Wide World of Sports* that aired in September following the games.

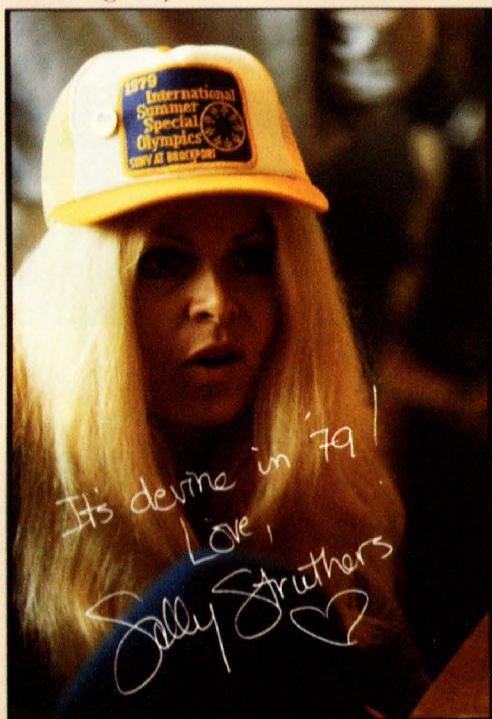
And then there was **Muhammad Ali**. He came early. He stayed late. And he threw himself into the event, participating in the opening ceremony and the ceremony issuing the commemorative stamps created for each day of the games, attending numerous events, boxing with



I love you  
Special Olympics!!!  
Mamun McBride



Thank you for  
inviting me to this  
important event.  
Marlo Thomas



Thank You!  
Dick Sargent  
Susan St. James



the athletes, kissing babies. "I'm a religious person," Ali said later. "One day I'll die and God will bless me for helping these poor people. I'm rich, I'm famous, but that doesn't mean anything to God. That's why I'm here," he said.

Ali stopped by President Al Brown's office and, as Brown recalls, the meeting began something like...

Ali: Are you Albert Brown?

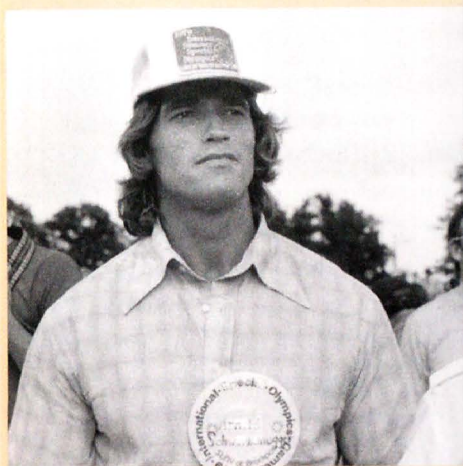
AWB: Yes I am.

Ali: Are you the president of this college?

AWB: Yes I am.

Ali: You're not as dumb as you look.

**"Warren "Koz" Kozireski,** WBSU station manager and instructor in the Department of Communications, was a 19-year-old communications major working between his freshman and sophomore years and was covering the Special Olympics for WBSU when he had the opportunity to interview "the champ." "I was shaking in my boots," he recalls. "I don't even remember what we talked about, but I do remember that he was a real gentleman and that interview really helped me with my career."



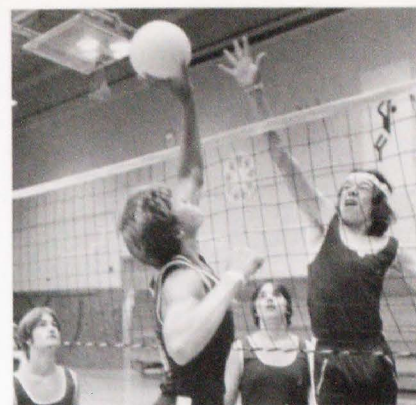
*Arnold Schwaneff*



to the individual participating Special Olympics chapters at the conclusion of the games.)

At 6:30 pm, on Thursday, August 9, 1979, with dignitaries in attendance and athletes gathered on the fields, and stands filled to capacity with families and friends, the 1979 International Special Olympics were officially underway. During the opening ceremonies, teams from all 50 states and 26 countries marched into Special Olympics Stadium under their state and country flags. The only glitch, according to Assistant Games Director (and Director of Academic Advisement Emeritus) **Tom Nugent**, was that one country refused to march until its flag, inadvertently flown upside down above Special Olympics Stadium, was reoriented.

It would be the last time all the athletes would come together as a group until they gathered for Adventure Day on Sunday when they and their 1,000 chaperones would board 200 buses for a day trip and picnic to Niagara Falls. The Olympic torch, called Hope, was lit by Brockport athlete **Steve Parlato** with Olympic heroes **Muhammad Ali**, **Rafer Johnson**, **John Naber** and **Dick Fosbury** looking on. Short welcomes were given by Senator **Ted Kennedy**, **Eunice Kennedy Shriver**, Senator **Daniel Patrick Moynihan**, and New York State Governor **Hugh Carey**. Johnson administered the Special Olympics oath. And the games were underway.







Lauren Lieberman, left, with students and a participant in her Gym and Swim program for children with special needs.

### The Legacy

The College at Brockport had been a leader in service to the intellectually and physically challenged prior to the 1979 International Special Olympic Games and it continued its teaching, research and service activities after them. While the International Special Olympic Games have grown too large for a return engagement — 8,500 athletes participated in the 2007 Summer Games in Beijing — the College and the Special Olympics Stadium have been host to three Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged.

*“Eunice was determined, strong-willed, and forceful. She also was poised, articulate and knew what she wanted. She is a fascinating woman and I loved working with her,”*

*Peter Smits*

**Joseph Winnick**, distinguished professor of physical education and sport, is in his fifth decade at the



Joseph Winnick

College where he developed America's first master's degree program in adapted physical education in 1968, and where his grants have enabled hundreds of

students to pursue the master's degree program.

His research, particularly the development of the Brockport Physical Fitness Test (with **Francis X. Short**, PhD, dean of the School of Health and Human Performance), and his edited text entitled *Adapted Physical Education and Sport* continue to be important contributions to the field.

**Lauren Lieberman**, PhD, professor of physical education and sport, established the first Camp Abilities at Brockport in 1996, providing sport and social activities for children with visual impairments, who are blind or deafblind. The program has expanded to include other Camp Abilities in Alaska, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Florida, Iowa, Long Island, and Arizona, as well as camps in Toronto, Puerto Rico and Guatemala.

In the 30 years that have passed since the International Special Olympics came to Brockport, the College's commitment to expanding the horizons for the intellectually and physically challenged continues to thrive as do the vivid memories of the thousands who came together to plan and participated in the games. But what lingers most according to **Peter Smits**, who is now vice president for advancement at Fresno State University, is that “the College and the community rose to the occasion. It was amazing what this town pulled off. We delivered on what we said were going to do.”